

Works of the Early Flemish Painters

THE VAN EYCKS AND THEIR FOLLOWERS. By Sir Martin Conway, M. P. E. P. Dutton & Co.

UPWARD of thirty years ago, when professor of art in Liverpool, the author of the present imposing volume delivered a series of lectures on the work of the early Flemish painters—the Van Eycks and their followers—and these lectures were published in a volume called "Early Flemish Artists," which brought the author a letter of warm praise from Ruskin. Sir Martin Conway in his introduction to this important book, remarks that he has often been asked to republish that early book, but found it "impossible honestly to do so," since it is now "hopelessly out of date." During the last thirty years the whole subject has been carefully studied in great detail by different scholars, many new discoveries have been made and so much that was then accepted has been disproved that scarcely a line of the original could stand. To revise the book was practically to rewrite it, and time was lacking for that as well as strong inclination.

But Sir Martin Conway notes that the war has changed many things, and his plans among them. The years when war made it impossible to travel among foreign museums were available for going over older ground; and so he turned to his collection of photographs, "to my old friends, who lie so quietly there, treasured up in the silent and changeless past—the great medieval painters of the provinces which now form Belgium, Holland and a part of France." He dug into his old notebooks, and went through his early volume again and found himself re-writing it, for, as he says, both the subject and the writer had changed. Yet the purpose of this new work and that old one is the same—not to

record and coordinate all the as yet discovered facts about painters and pictures, nor even to discuss the works of any artist, however great, nor necessarily any work of every identified artist of the period, however small, but to open the way for the ordinary intelligent person to enter into this particular domain of art and there orient himself and find a solution of such difficulties as are to be encountered on the threshold.

Sir Martin names three great scholars whose labors have been fruitful in research in the history of this school—Mr. W. H. James Weale, Dr. Friedlander and Prof. G. Hulin de Loo; and the study was founded by the first of them. More than fifty years ago he began to decipher the archives of Bruges, that ancient city which was the home of so many artists in the fifteenth century. Among worthy successors and students of a later time the two other named are most eminent, and they have been aided by advantages not at the disposal of earlier students. With the vast resources of photography and in a time of myriad museum and sale catalogues and special magazines, in the modern ease of travel and communication, their work could go on much faster and more satisfactorily. Thus their progress was rapid and continuous; the mass of material collected but as yet unpublished is very great, and Sir Martin predicts encyclopedic works upon the subject in various details. Both Dr. Friedlander and Prof. Hulin "have succeeded in isolating from the mass of existing pictures whose authorship has been forgotten groups of works which they are able to assign with assurance," and to all this material the present author has had access and has collaborated with them.

But Sir Martin disclaims any purpose of attempting, in this book, a complete digest of that knowledge, since to the ordinary lover of art the works of second rate masters are not important. Owners and special students of such pictures get their own special pleasure from them; but the great men and the

really great pictures are enough for the great majority who wish to enjoy rather than to know. Nobody need care so much for whom particular paintings were made if their names do not mean much, if their achievements did not make any permanent mark in history. The important pictures are now known pretty definitely, correctly named and dated. "The cities of Europe have been rummaged from garret to basement, and most of the forgotten treasures of the first rank have been brought to light." But one point is much to be regretted—that the present ownership of many of the pictures cited here is not recorded. Collections are continually dispersed at auction, and in a stream of works of art coming to America individual pictures are often lost track of. Thus the author is unable to indicate the present resting place of a large proportion of the pictures which he has studied in their former homes in the older countries. For many individual courtesies from American friends and owners in this country, for photographs or information, he expresses his thanks. He also expresses his regret that he has not been able to include as many illustrations as he had intended, since their cost would make the book's price greater than the student would be willing to pay. Therefore he has made careful selection. Well known pictures have seldom been chosen, but works difficult of access have been preferred to the well known works of the famous.

Besides the frontispiece, in photograph, this bulky volume has twenty-four full page plates, each containing photographic reproductions of four paintings. Thus he has packed his illustrations as closely as possible, and reference numbers under each picture refer to the page in the book where reference to it is made. The text lies in thirty-two chapters, the "Gothic Age," the "Four Dukes," the "Hours of Chantilly," the "Hours of Turin" (the frontispiece is a reproduction of a page in that priceless manuscript, now lost by fire, the "Hours of Milan"), "Hubert van Eyck," "John van Eyck," "The Court" (which includes a dissertation on medieval

manners), "The Guild System," "Peter Christus," "Robert Campin and Jacques Daret," "Roger van der Weyden," "Dirck Bouts," "Hugo van der Goes," "Justus of Ghent," "Some Dutchmen" (with descriptions of medieval gardens), "Geertgen van Sint Jans," "Hans Memling," "Minor Bruges Painters of the Fifteenth Century," "Brabant Painters After Roger and Bouts," "Gerard David," "Later Bruges Artists," "Quentin Massys," "Jerome Bosch," "Joachim de Patinir and His Followers," "Mabuse," "The Antwerp Mannerists," "Jan Joest, Barthel Bruyn and the Van Cleves," "Bernard van Orley," "Jan Mostaert and Some Anonymous Dutch Painters," "Cornelis Engebrechtsen and Jacob van Oostanen," "Lucas van Leyden" and "Peter Bruegel," and of this last says Sir Martin: "He was a great man, a very great man, one of the world's great painters, and to think of him merely as a 'droll' is to do him great injustice. He stands at the end, as the Van Eycks stood at the beginning, of the series of artists who expressed the glory of the Netherlands in the first period of their high civilization."

If Peter Bruegel stands at the end of this great line, the two Van Eycks stand unquestionably in first place, and Hubert is the eminent leader. Sir Martin remarks that we cannot profitably launch on the stream of artistic production in the time of the Van Eycks without giving preliminary study to "the upper reaches in the great realm of Gothic achievement." So he devotes his first chapter to "The Gothic Age," considering its general character and the primacy of architecture at that period; the Mystics, the Cologne painters and the "Paradise Pictures." In his second chapter, "The Four Dukes," in which he sets down the results of the last three decades of study of archives, he gives some detailed information about "these four men who were the great art patrons toward the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries—King Charles V. of France, Louis Duke of Anjou, Philip the Hardy, Duke of Normandy, and John Duke of Berry." This last was evi-

dently the most artistically gifted of the four, and every kind of splendid thing that could then be made was produced in the utmost possible perfection for him. He built numerous elaborate chateaux, his manuscripts were of the most splendid, his plate the most sumptuous. The mere inventories of his goods bewilder the modern student. . . . Only a small fraction of this Duke's treasures have survived, but each is a thing of high and sometimes almost incalculable value measured in mere money. Greater, however, than the actual output of fine works which came into existence at his bidding was the impulse he gave to the development of art." Among the most notable specifications of separate objects and artists in this chapter are the "Book of Hours of Jeanne de France" (an exquisite miniature is reproduced), Jacques Bandol of Paris (whose astonishing miniature of King Charles V. with its enormous nose is photographed), the "Parement de Narbonne," the silk hanging preserved in the Louvre; the great Jacquemart de Hesdin (whose sketch book is in the Morgan collection), Merchoir Broederlam of Ypres, Jacques Coene and scores of masters of the art of miniature painting; to the Limbourg Brothers alone are due thirty-nine large miniatures, two of medium size and twenty-four small ones.

So the author brings us, understandingly, to the first identification of the work of a great new master painter, whole "internal evidence" in his miniatures is overwhelming—Hubert van Eyck. The painter of the Ghent altar piece is the only person capable of producing the miniature at the foot of one of the pages in the "Hours of Turin," that most magnificent manuscript, part of which was destroyed by fire at the Turin Library in 1904—some part of it still survives in the Trivulzio Library at Milan. The same artist drew the larger miniature on the same page—depicting the birth of St. John Baptist as taking place in the bedchamber of a Flemish palace. This page, with its foliated border, is reproduced in photogravure as frontispiece to the present volume.

Hubert van Eyck's younger brother, John, was his pupil, and many pictures were painted in part by both. The greatness of Hubert was his mastery of atmospheric as well as linear perspective—far in advance of any other painter in northern Europe. "It used to be said that the Van Eycks invented oil painting. Their method is not what modern artists understand by oil painting, nor does it matter. . . . The thing that is patent is that the process was novel, and it came into use first in pictures painted by Hubert, while it was carried to greater perfection in later days by John. Pictures done in the new method look brighter, richer in tone, more enamel-like in surface, and are evidently less tender and more durable as well as more brilliant and jewel-like in color than those of an earlier date. Thus Hubert was an innovator in technique as well as in the style and subjects of his art."

Throughout this treasury of a book the author keeps his interest unflagging; each new detail is of its own importance. The volume is a worthy monument of the veteran scholar and critic.

Ralph D. Paine, whose latest book, "Roads of Adventure," Houghton, Mifflin Company, will publish in the autumn, has just returned from an equatorial pleasure cruise on a vessel that ships as engineer another very distinguished writing man—William McFee. Mr. Paine with characteristic modesty has immortalized the voyage in the following imperishable saga:

The critics correctly agree
That Paine cannot write like McFee,
But they got on together
In tropical weather
Across the Caribbean Sea.

For the title for his latest book, "The Everlasting Whisper," Jackson Gregory made use of Rudyard Kipling's poem "The Explorer," deriving the name from the lines which run:

"One everlasting whisper, night and day repeated—so:
'Something hidden. Go and find it.
Go and look behind the Ranges—
Something lost behind the Ranges.
Lost and waiting for you. Go!'"

From London comes the news of the marriage of Ethel M. Dell, the novelist, to Col. Gerard Savage on June 7. The Putnams will publish next autumn her new novel "Charles Rex."

New Fiction in Varied Forms

Continued from Preceding Page.

In the hands of a competent craftsman such as Mr. Raine the lure of the North is always compelling. The romance of the great Canadian forests and snow swept plains is inexhaustible. Mr. Raine also always writes from first hand knowledge. He "gets up" his material conscientiously, and one is convinced that he is not inventing or imagining his detail.

The necessary bad man is a very bad man indeed, but he is not a grotesque. So, too, the Indians, tame and wild, are pretty satisfying, although there is just a little of the "noble red man" about them, and the young Indian who refrains from shooting the criminal because he is a Christian, and who allows himself to be captured and tortured, does call for a little believing on the part of the reader.

The girl in the case is something better than a conventional heroine at times, though she, and the other minor people, remain hardly more than necessary background for the hero himself, who holds the lime-light all the time. The concluding chapters involve a good old fashioned contest in nobility and self-sacrifice by the hero and his friend that is a little reminiscent of John Alden and Miles Standish, but it never quite drops to sentimentality. The book is a very good sample of its familiar breed of the romance of adventure.

HIS GRACE GIVES NOTICE. By Lady Troubridge. Duffield & Co.

LADY TROUBRIDGE assures us in a prefatory note that "the annals of great families contain records of many strange events of which the world at large knows nothing. . . . Now and then an event occurs which is singularly full of real romance." The implication of reality as to the ensuing story may have some reference to actual fact, but it has no other, truer kind of reality. This is the story of a deserving young man who is reduced, temporarily, when the tale begins to taking a job as a footman in the household of a noble lord,

but who turns out to be the mislaid heir to a genuine dukedom. From George, the up and coming footman, he is metamorphosed into the Duke of St. Bevis. As might be suspected, the process is unsettling to his peace of mind. He is a Canadian and has been a soldier, and he has deeply ingrained ideals of human equality. And there was Cynthia, the daughter of the house, who had been haughty to him while he was a servant.

Cynthia is also a very unwise young woman, bound to get into trouble anyhow, and sure to need rescuing. Her intermediate adventures, and those of George—now the Duke—may be skipped to the point where he satisfactorily rescues her from the clutches of a base deceiver with whom she has run away. She finds that the aforesaid deceiver doesn't mean to marry her after all. Whereupon enter George and all is well. The plot somehow suggests stories we have read before, many years ago, nor is there any saving distinction in the author's treatment of it.

RAVENSDENE COURT.—By J. S. Fletcher. Alfred A. Knopf.

DURING the last year or so it has been demonstrated that there are scores of clever writers, English and American, male and female, who can produce fairly good detective mystery stories. Never before has there been so large a percentage of this form of fiction in a season's output. But it is also true that there are not more than perhaps half a dozen whose work is more than fairly good. Among those who stick closely to the type and do not attempt to merge it with any other, Mr. Fletcher is clearly one of the few master craftsmen. He is immensely prolific—this is his third book within a year—but there is also an astonishing variety in his stories. They are variations on a theme, but sufficiently variant to be, each one, markedly individual. Curiously, too, one remembers his plots; the story stays with you, which is more than can be said of most such.

This new story is one of his best.

Perhaps the secret of his sound popularity, here and in England, lies somewhat in his fine sense of proportion, and in his moderation. There is never anything too much; his eccentric people, like the aged but sprightly Mr. Cazalette of this tale, are just eccentric enough. They stop short of becoming grotesques, and their eccentricities are naturally a part of the plot. In this story there is mystery in lavish abundance and manifold variety, but no item of it is overdone, and it all finally dovetails together into an orderly pattern.

This one starts with a double barreled murder mystery: Two brothers, middle aged sailors, are killed in the same way, at the same time but at points hundreds of miles apart. There are no apparent clues. The chase leads far backward for a real starting point—as far in fact as the sixteenth century and the confiscation of monastery wealth. There are also Chinamen, a bank robbery, a buried hoard, a kidnapping, and finally a comprehensively murderous battle. Mr. Fletcher frankly uses all the well known properties all the good old tricks and familiar stage settings, but always manages to give them a fresh, active interest. There is nothing pretentious about it, but it is really extraordinarily clever.

THE SECRET ADVERSARY. By Agatha Christie. Dodd, Mead & Co.

THIS British mystery story deserves a little loving attention and pleased appreciation from an American audience for its marvelous presentation of a wandering American multimillionaire. The exquisite humor of it is quite unintentional, making it all the more charming. It is a brave attempt on the part of an enterprising Briton to create a typical modern American suited to the British taste. His dialect alone is enough to give him distinction, for he manages to combine, sometimes in a single sentence, obsolete local phrases from the long defunct New England, the Wild West of the cowboy romance, even the far South of ante-bellum days, and up to date New York slang, with an oc-

casional reminiscence of the long vanished Bowery boy. And his name is Julius P. Hershheimer, which, any one must admit, is *echt Amerikanisch*. And his favorite adjective, for any occasion, singularly enough, is "plumb," which he seems to use as almost an equivalent for that British word which is usually printed as "b-y." He also says "By gum!" Mr. Hershheimer slings his millions by the million. At one crisis he proposes to restate the sinking of the Lusitania, to jolt the memory of a certain character. When the surprised English doctor appears puzzled, Julius exclaims:

"What's the difficulty? Hire a liner!"

"A liner!" murmured Dr. Hall faintly.

"Hire some passengers, hire a submarine—that's the only difficulty, I guess. Governments are apt to be a bit hide bound over their engines of war. . . . Still, I guess that can be got over. Ever heard of the word 'graft,' sir? Well, graft gets there every time. I reckon that we shan't really need to fire a torpedo. If every one hustles around and screams loud enough that the ship is sinking, it ought to be enough for . . . Jane."

If one may borrow, in return, what seems to be an increasingly popular piece of London slang, Julius is "priceless." Remember, he is supposed to be a typical, cultured American gentleman.

The rest of the story is fairly well done, with some clever variants of established plots. Mysterious papers were handed by a drowning man to a girl as the Lusitania went down, and there is a resultant mix up of Bolshevik, after-the-war Germans, Sinn Fein and other plotters, and a general run around after the "secret," conducted largely by two enterprising amateur detectives, male and female, and a very mysterious "Mr. Brown." The suspense is well kept up, and it will take an experienced guesser to anticipate the solution. But the gem of the piece is Julius. The British characters see nothing wrong with him, and one of the deputy heroines marries him in the end. He alone is worth the price of admission.